

Public Document Pack

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Chief Officer (Governance)
Prif Swyddog (Llywodraethu)



To: Cllr Ron Hampson (Chair)

CS/NG

Councillors: Amanda Bragg, David Cox,
Paul Cunningham, Peter Curtis, Ron Davies,
Rosetta Dolphin, Jim Falshaw,
George Hardcastle, Ray Hughes,
Hilary Isherwood, Brian Lloyd, Mike Reece,
Gareth Roberts and Sharon Williams

20 November 2014

Sharon Thomas 01352 702324
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Dear Sir / Madam

A meeting of the **HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** will be held in the **DELYN COMMITTEE ROOM, COUNTY HALL, MOLD CH7 6NA** on **WEDNESDAY, 26TH NOVEMBER, 2014** at **10.00 AM** to consider the following items.

Yours faithfully

Democracy & Governance Manager

A G E N D A

- 1 **APOLOGIES**
- 2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)**
- 3 **MINUTES** (Pages 1 - 10)

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2014 (copy enclosed).

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The Council welcomes correspondence in Welsh or English
Mae'r Cyngor yn croesawau gohebiaeth yn y Cymraeg neu'r Saesneg

- 4 **SERVICE CHARGES/ASSISTED GARDENING SERVICE** (Pages 11 - 18)
Report of Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise) enclosed.
- 5 **NORTH EAST WALES HOMES - UPDATE** (Pages 19 - 28)
Report of Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise) enclosed.
- 6 **HOUSING ACT WALES 2014** (Pages 29 - 50)
Report of Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise) enclosed.
- 7 **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME** (Pages 51 - 56)
Report of Housing and Learning Overview and Scrutiny Facilitator enclosed.

HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE **15 OCTOBER 2014**

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held in the Delyn Committee Room, County Hall, Mold on Wednesday, 15 October 2014

PRESENT: Councillor Ron Hampson (Chairman)

Councillors: Amanda Bragg, Paul Cunningham, Peter Curtis, Ron Davies, Rosetta Dolphin, Jim Falshaw, George Hardcastle, Ray Hughes, Brian Lloyd, Mike Reece, Gareth Roberts and Sharon Williams

Members of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee had been invited to attend for Agenda Item 4 - Welfare Reform

Present: Councillors: Ian Dunbar, Richard Jones and Paul Shotton

APOLOGIES: Councillor David Cox, Councillors Robin Guest and Richard Lloyd from the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee

CONTRIBUTORS: Cabinet Member for Housing, Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise), Housing Asset Manager, Housing Regeneration & Strategy Manager and Capital Works Manager

Team Manager - Advice & Homeless Service and Neighbourhood Housing Manager (for minute number 30)

Mrs Mavis Crofts, Chair of the Flintshire Federation of Tenants & Residents Association (for minute numbers 31 and 32)

IN ATTENDANCE: Housing & Learning Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator and Committee Officer

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

None were received.

29. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2014 had been circulated with the agenda.

Matters Arising

In response to a query from Councillor Rosetta Dolphin on the review of garage sites, the Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise) said it was intended to share information at all-Members workshops to cover garage sites in all wards. Agreement to this proposal would be sought under Agenda Item 5.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

30. WELFARE REFORM UPDATE

The Team Manager - Advice & Homeless Service introduced the report giving the latest position with the reforms being introduced to the social security system and actions taken locally to provide help and support to affected residents in Flintshire.

He explained that many of the concerns around the impact of changes had been identified at an earlier stage and that various activities had been put in place to target and support those affected, particularly the more vulnerable households. He provided information on the effects of the Benefit Cap and Spare Room Subsidy ('bedroom tax') to date, as detailed in the report. On the latter, it was noted that an outcome was awaited on a proposed change in legislation which would reduce the number of people having a reduction in their Housing Benefit. Information was provided on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme where there was concern around the level of future funding from the Welsh Government (WG). On the Discretionary Assistance Fund, it was reported that funding would be available from WG to continue with the scheme from April 2015 onwards and that 66% of applications made in Flintshire had been successful.

During an update on Personal Independence Payments (PIP), it was reported that the DWP had committed to tackling lengthy delays experienced by some claimants and that a large-scale reassessment of Disability Living Allowance (which would be transferred to PIP) in the UK would impact on the number of claimants within Flintshire. The report set out measures being taken by the Council to help claimants to access the necessary advice and support.

The Team Manager - Advice & Homeless Service gave an update on the rollout of Universal Credit where concerns had previously been raised over the impact on households if national IT systems were to fail. He welcomed the continued phased rollout of Universal Credit and the introduction of a 'Local Delivery Agreement' with the Council and its partners, and went on to say that the model introduced in Flintshire on how individuals could access personal budgeting support was to be used nationwide. He spoke of the need for further discussion and progression on Universal Credit, with some improvements having already been introduced.

An update on Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) gave the statistics to date and reported on involvement by the Council's Housing Benefits section in a pan-Wales project to share Flintshire's approach to DHP which was regarded as good practice. An overview was given of the various workstreams which were set out in the report.

The Neighbourhood Housing Manager provided a summary of the operational side, which was detailed in the appendix to the report. It was noted that eight out of ten tenants in Flintshire affected by the reforms were making

payments on their rent accounts to try to address the shortfall and Table 2 showed the number of tenants impacted by the spare room subsidy who were in rent arrears (including some in that position prior to the reforms). Agreement had previously been reached by the Committee for the Council to take a balanced view on tenants in arrears and to judge each case individually to find the right solution. Reference was also made to the decision made by the Committee on the allocation of properties, and the need for Member feedback on whether to continue with this policy given the likelihood for most individuals to accept the first property offered to them.

The Neighbourhood Housing Manager summarised the key findings on the cost of mitigating the impact of welfare reforms in Flintshire, mainly in terms of staff resources. She also reported on the findings of two pilot projects carried out in Salford and Warrington on preparing tenants for Universal Credit where the former had indicated a better success rate (with a greater level of resources) than the latter.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked the officers for the detailed report and said that the range of work undertaken to help vulnerable households in facing the challenges of welfare reforms, was recognised.

The Cabinet Member for Housing said that she remained in agreement with the decision made by the Committee in January 2013 to allocate Council properties based on housing need. She raised concerns about the increase in children in need figures and referred to the statistics for August 2014 where it was reported that 82% of tenants impacted by the spare room subsidy were in rent arrears.

On the spare room subsidy, Councillor Paul Shotton referred to the lack of smaller properties available and raised concerns around IT issues on the rollout of Universal Credit and the need to submit claims online.

Councillor Amanda Bragg welcomed the comprehensive report which was easy to read and commented on the Council's duty of care in relation to homelessness. The Neighbourhood Housing Manager said that each case was assessed individually and that the preferred approach was to work with individuals to help manage their circumstances to avoid costly Court action, however the Council did not have the same duty in cases of intentional homelessness. The Team Manager - Advice & Homeless Service agreed to provide a response separately on the percentage of DHP funding used to date.

On Universal Credit, Councillor Rosetta Dolphin sought clarification on the potential for direct payments of the housing cost element to be made to social landlords and pointed out that many tenants did not want the responsibility of managing their own housing payments. The Team Manager - Advice & Homeless Service said there was provision for the landlord to make the request at the start of the claiming process if it was felt that the claimant did not have the necessary skills to manage their own rent payments. Consultation was currently open to seek views on allowing DWP to share information with social landlords to enable them to support tenants claiming Universal Credit. Councillor Dolphin

referred to the number of tenants impacted by the spare room subsidy who were in rent arrears up to £300 and felt that this particular group needed to be addressed to avoid further escalation and that direct payments to tenants could impact further on rent arrears.

Councillor George Hardcastle remarked on the statistics in the report of tenants affected by the spare room subsidy who had failed to make up the shortfall in rent and the challenge in encouraging more to downsize in view of the lack of smaller properties available.

The Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise) said that there was no simple solution and that welfare reforms affected around 700 of the Council's tenants with some opting not to downsize as they preferred to remain in their current areas. However, there were a number of initiatives being taken to improve the situation such as the Council house building programme, which would prioritise smaller properties, and the procurement exercise on the Strategic Housing and Regeneration Programme.

Councillor Paul Cunningham welcomed the early intervention steps being taken by officers and asked about the number of tenants who had fallen into the 'won't pay' rather than 'can't pay' category of rent arrears and had refused the support offered by the Council. The Neighbourhood Housing Manager agreed to provide this information.

Concerns were raised by Councillor Peter Curtis at the impact of welfare reforms on more vulnerable tenants and the stress associated with rent arrears.

On the spare room subsidy, Councillor Richard Jones referred to the proposed amendment for under-occupying social housing tenants to be exempt from having their Housing Benefit reduced if they could not find a smaller home and asked whether a rebate would be awarded. The Team Manager - Advice & Homeless Service felt that this was unlikely, if the proposed amendment was passed. He agreed to provide a separate response on the risk to the Council in relation to funding required for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. On the Flintshire Advice Referral Gateway, the 12-month post within Flintshire Citizens' Advice Bureau was funded mainly by the WG and partly by the DWP. There was no guarantee of funding beyond that, however the results of a comprehensive review on the impact of the Referral Gateway were currently being assessed and the outcomes would guide future funding applications.

Councillor Jones asked whether a more personal approach should be taken to support some individuals in rent arrears where a range of issues was involved. The Neighbourhood Housing Manager said that the Council worked closely with other support agencies and that a third party could be appointed by the Court to help manage an individual's money if needed. She added that cases were considered on an individual basis and details of any specific cases could be referred to her for a fuller response.

Following questions from Councillor Ian Dunbar, the Team Manager - Advice & Homeless Service provided explanation on the report produced by

Sheffield Hallam University Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research which would help inform WG policies. He added that the WG was due to publish its Child Poverty Strategy at the end of November 2014, which would take account of the good work being undertaken by Councils such as Flintshire, to mitigate the impacts of the welfare reforms.

Councillor Jim Falshaw referred to the Welfare Reform Response Team who had directly targeted over 250 vulnerable households between May 2013 and August 2014 and asked how many families had engaged with the service. The Team Manager - Advice & Homeless Service agreed to provide details separately and said that the majority of households who responded had benefited from the service, for example receiving help to switch energy suppliers. Although resources did not allow for ongoing support and cases were closed when the support reached a natural end, households were able to renew contact with the service if needed.

The Chairman thanked the officers for their work, particularly the Welfare Response, Welfare Rights and Rent Arrears teams.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the report and proactive work undertaken by the Council, together with its partners, to mitigate the full impact of welfare reforms from falling upon vulnerable households.

31. WHQS DELIVERY PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Housing Asset Manager presented the report to seek the views of the Committee on proposals for the delivery of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) programme of works in the Council's stock by 2020. This was an earlier timescale, involving prudential borrowing, than that originally forecast in the Choices Document.

The report set out the actions undertaken since discussion at the Committee's meeting on 8 January 2014 on the approach to the next phase of the investment programme for delivery of the WHQS. Although the six year programme had focussed on internal work to properties, as set out in the Choices Document, it was proposed that other elements would now be included. Whilst progress had been made during the year to verify data on the Council's stock and give assurance on financial assumptions, an update on the capital works programme reported that most of the workstream elements within the Choices Document continued to be exceeded. In line with the commitment previously given, an update was given on the employment and training opportunities achieved through the WHQS which had exceeded expectations.

To develop the new six year programme, a consultation exercise had taken place with tenants to help inform the prioritisation of remaining workstreams aligned to six delivery districts which had been identified from the re-grouping of geographical areas. A summary of proposed workstreams remaining for each district was appended to the report and would require local knowledge input by

consulting with tenants and local Members. It was intended that area specific issues and projects, identified through consultation, would be tackled through environmental workstreams including outcomes from the garages review which would require further discussion with local Members prior to seeking Cabinet approval. Once approved, the works programme would be published and subject to the tendering process ready for commencement on site from April 2015.

The Chairman thanked officers for the report and in particular welcomed the consultation with tenants and the creation of jobs and apprenticeships.

Mrs Mavis Crofts, Chair of the Flintshire Federation of Tenants & Residents Association, referred to the survey where 41% of tenants responding had stated a preference for kitchens and bathroom upgrades to be carried out at the same time. Mrs Croft asked if the age and circumstances of these tenants were known, so that this could be taken into account when scheduling the work to ease the disruption. The Housing Asset Manager said that age bandings had been included on the survey questionnaire to enable this type of data to be collated. He added that it was important to minimise disruption to the tenants and that part of the rationale behind separating the work into district areas was to ensure that contractors remained working on site in those concentrated areas making it easier to pick up any unresolved issues.

When asked by Councillor Mike Reece about the inclusion of solid brick properties in external works, the Housing Regeneration & Strategy Manager said that consideration was being given to extending the external wall project, subject to available funding and to bring forward the energy efficiency programme.

Councillor Rosetta Dolphin commented on the difference in scale of work in the district areas and asked about timescales on the external work in the programme. On the completion of bathroom and kitchen work together, she stressed the importance of ensuring that the design was correct to ensure the right fit prior to installation.

The Housing Asset Manager acknowledged that there were some inconsistencies within the district areas, however the aim was to create concentrated areas which would benefit the contractors and management of each contract. The external works element would prioritise the oldest reported issues first and would be primarily undertaken by the Council's DLO team.

Councillor George Hardcastle thanked officers for the report and congratulated the Housing team for their work, particular on job creation. In response to a query on the completion of bathroom and kitchen upgrades together, the Capital Works Manager confirmed that tenants could opt to have the work carried out at separate times if they wished.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee supports the six proposed district areas as an appropriate grouping of properties to enable officers to finalise the WHQS delivery programme and develop proposals for which particular work

stream should be completed in which year, noting that these would be discussed prior to finalisation at a Member workshop; and

- (b) That further consultations take place to agree the scope and content of environmental work streams in each area after internal and external work streams are well underway.

32. INTRODUCTION OF SELF FINANCING FOR THE HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT

The Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise) introduced the report to update the Committee on progress with introducing self-financing for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), following the report received in July 2014. The report outlined the changes affecting the 11 stock-owning Councils in Wales, including Flintshire, to cease the subsidy system and to introduce self-financing from April 2015 through voluntary agreement by all 11 Councils.

Following the response to the Welsh Government (WG) consultation paper, the Chief Officer was pleased to report that all representations made by the Council had been included in the recommendations of the former Housing Minister. Although the distribution of borrowing limits amongst the 11 Councils was yet to be announced by the WG, the introduction of self-financing would provide £1m of additional revenue funding in the HRA to invest in tenants' homes and support the achievement of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2020 as well as supporting the Council house building programme.

Members were advised of work being undertaken to develop a full project plan to prepare for self-financing and the need for arrangements for the HRA to be in place earlier than usual to enable the introduction of self-financing by 1 April 2015. Along with a tenants' conference to be held in the Autumn, there were plans to hold an all-Member workshop to share detailed information on the process to aid consideration of the HRA and Treasury Management Strategy at County Council.

Mrs Mavis Crofts, Chair of the Flintshire Federation of Tenants & Residents' Association thanked the Chief Officer and her team for the consultation carried out with tenants and welcomed the explanations given on this complex topic.

In response to a query, the Chief Officer said that the borrowing needed to exit the system was affordable and that rents would not be affected as a result of this. However, rent increases would occur to reach 'convergence' in line with the WG rent-setting policy.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman paid tribute to Mrs Crofts who was due to end her term as Chair of the Federation and expressed his gratitude for her contributions to housing issues.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report and the positive programme to introduce self-financing for Council housing be noted; and
- (b) That the proposal to arrange a Member workshop to consider arrangements for the introduction of self-financing for the Housing Revenue Account be supported.

33. USE OF COMMUTED SUMS

The Housing Regeneration & Strategy Manager introduced the report to seek the support and views of the Committee on the proposed utilisation of commuted sums (derived for the purposes of providing affordable housing). The report detailed the Council's policies which enabled a commuted sum to be paid by a developer towards the provision of affordable housing on an alternative site where it was not possible to incorporate this on a particular scheme meeting the criteria.

The Housing Regeneration & Strategy Manager outlined the main areas of change and drew attention to the need to update the Council's Local Planning Guidance Note No.9 to which Planning colleagues were in agreement.

Councillor Gareth Roberts referred to concerns by the Council's Planning Committee on inconsistencies on some planning decisions in relation to Section 106 Agreements. The Chief Officer (Community & Enterprise) said that this was a matter for the Planning Committee, but that encouraging individuals to register on the Affordable Housing Register would prove demand in certain areas.

Following comments from Councillor Ian Dunbar on criteria for affordable housing, the Chief Officer said that Council owned land would be given priority, however a broader scope was needed to enable certain sites outside the Council's ownership to be considered for development to meet the priorities of the community.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee support the process for the acceptance, calculation use of commuted sums as outlined in the report and Local Planning Guidance Note No. 9 - Affordable Housing; and
- (b) That a further review of the Policy take place in April 2015, with a view to implementing the Community Infrastructure Levy which, when implemented, will replace the Section 106 commuted sums regime.

34. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Housing & Learning Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator introduced a report to enable the Committee to consider the Forward Work Programme. She

advised that arrangements would be made for the Member workshops referred to earlier in the meeting.

Councillor Paul Shotton suggested that the Committee may wish to consider a future item on solar water heating. The Housing Regeneration & Strategy Manager said that some types of solar thermal equipment had been used on some properties and that this would be explored further.

Councillor Mike Reece thanked officers for their work to address derelict buildings.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Work Programme be updated accordingly.

35. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There was one member of the public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 10.00 am and ended at 12.20 pm)

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Chairman

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FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**
DATE: **WEDNESDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2014**
REPORT BY: **CHIEF OFFICER (COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE)**
SUBJECT: **SERVICE CHARGES/ASSISTED GARDENING SERVICE**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.01 The purpose of the report is to set out the requirements for the council to introduce service charging for tenants who receive some services which other tenants do not.
- 1.02 The report aims to explain the options open to the council in the way that it introduces and applies these charges, to highlights the risks and benefits of these options and to makes recommendations on the way forward.

2.00 BACKGROUND

- 2.01 Welsh Government expect all social landlords to separate services from rents and introduce charging from 2015. Councils are expected to recover the cost of services in addition to rent.
- 2.02 The rationale for this is that currently some tenants receive services that other tenants do not and therefore the charging policy lacks transparency and is arguably unfair.
- 2.03 At the Cabinet meeting on 16th September 2014 a new Rent policy for council housing was agreed to enable submission of the HRA business plan to Welsh Government by the end of September 2014. This report contained proposals to meet the Welsh Government requirement to introduce charging for services on a phased basis.
- 2.04 The kinds of services that may be subject to service charges are as follows:
- 2.05 **Communal Services**
Cleaning charges in communal areas (not community rooms)
- Laundry facilities
 - Janitors service (high rise only)
 - Aerial maintenance and digital services
 - Grounds maintenance/estate caretakers
 - Management charge for administering service charge

2.06 **Individual Services**

- Individual Grass cutting
- Individual Hedge cutting

2.07 There are currently £0.700m of services being provided to tenants. It is recognised at the moment that the costs for providing some of the services identified above are not value for money and the quality of some services will need to be improved and costs reduced.

2.08 In addition there are community rooms at many sheltered schemes, which are used by community groups in addition to the residents themselves. In most schemes there are no charges made for using these rooms and therefore a full review will be undertaken and a future strategy developed for this part of the Housing service.

2.09 From a tenant's perspective, the implementation of service charges will lead to greater transparency. It will become clear how much services cost and improved tenant awareness will provide greater accountability for the services that are being delivered.

2.10 With the exception of services provided for the benefit of individuals, the service charges described above are all currently "housing benefit eligible". At the beginning of this financial year 67% of tenants were in receipt of full or partial housing benefit.

Assisted Gardening Service

2.11 The assisted gardening service would not currently be eligible to be covered by housing benefit. Prior to April 2014, the Council provided an assisted gardening service free of charge to some tenants.

2.12 In line with the Welsh Government requirement to charge individual tenants for services that they receive, that other tenants don't, a new scheme was implemented in April 2014. The new scheme introduced a charge for all tenants based on the size of the garden, and whether tenants wanted hedge cutting, in addition to lawns.

2.13 Tenants who were on the earlier free scheme were migrated onto the new scheme, with an option to "opt-out". The scheme was problematic to administer for a number of reasons:

- Inaccurate data regarding the size of lawn to be cut and length of hedges to be cut resulted in inaccurate bills being issued
- The council's rent IT System was unable to accommodate the new charges, and therefore tenants did not have the option to pay the charge weekly/monthly with their rent.

- Many tenants had not realised it was an opt-out service, and were unhappy that they were notified of the potential charge for the service, when they did not want the service provided now it was chargeable.

2.14 Following receipt of a range of complaints about the new service cabinet agreed to suspend charging for 2014/15 and to provide the service at no cost to all those who had received the service previously and who were disabled. Refunds were issued to those who had qualified for the free service and a formal apology given.

2.15 The Housing Revenue Account cannot continue to provide a non chargeable service. The Council is mandated to introduce service charges. The principle underlying this is that it is inequitable for some tenants to receive a service, which is funded through rent payments by all tenants. The cost of the service is currently circa £0.200m per year (contract and administration).

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

Service Charging Policy

3.01 Charges would be introduced on a phased basis for existing tenants over 3 years from 2016 leaving a full year to review, consult and improve services. Charging would be introduced for new tenants from April 2015.

3.02 Introducing service charging for all the services shown above would bring in additional income to the HRA of circa £0.700m per annum by 2018/19 (Excluding administration charges).

3.03 There are two methods for charging for services:-

Option 1

3.04 The total cost of each chargeable service is shared equally amongst all tenants receiving that type of service. For example, all flats that receive cleaning of communal areas would be charged the same, regardless of how much the cleaning cost in each building. This is the simplest to administer and explain and helps to address cost differences where, for example one block of flats is significantly larger than another and has more communal space. However, costs would not be fully transparent with this model.

Option 2

3.05 Each service is charged on actual costs. This would create maximum transparency although there would be disparity in cost of services to different buildings and normally this means that those in small blocks of flats pay more than those in larger blocks of flats due to economies

of scale.

- 3.06 Option 1 is the agreed option as this would be the simplest to explain and administer.

Implementation Transition

- 3.07 Councils that have implemented service charges have done so via two different methods:
- Option 1 de pooling from rents which sees the rent reduce by the value of the service charge and then the rent increases back to target rent over a transitional period. This approach works well when all charges are implemented in year 1.
 - Option 2 is not to de pool but to keep rents at their current levels and phase service charges in gradually as an additional charge over a period of 3 years.
- 3.08 Option 2 is the agreed option as this would allow a phased implementation, allowing time for each service to be reviewed and for full discussion with those tenants who would be affected by the implementation of any charge.
- 3.09 It has been agreed that in year 1 (2016/17), charges are introduced for TV aerial maintenance and digital services, and cleaning services. TV aerials charging will be circa £1.30 per week, with cleaning services circa £2.50. This would then be followed in the next two years by firstly laundry and janitor services (2017/18) and finally grounds maintenance/caretaking in (2018/19), after full review of quality and price, alongside resident consultation.

Charging Policy for Assisted Gardening Service

- 3.10 It is recommended that charging will not be reintroduced until 2016 following full and detailed tenant consultation. Two levels of charge are proposed; one for small gardens and one for medium/large, and a single charge for hedge cutting. These charges would be collected weekly/monthly with rent payments. They would be simple to administer and would recognise that in the main tenants do not choose the size of the garden in their home.
- 3.11 The aim is to provide an affordable chargeable service to all tenants but with a discount to qualifying tenants (those aged over 70 or with a disability)
- 3.12 Benefits
- The council will recover the majority of the cost of the service and any shortfall in income to the HRA would be reduced.

- The scheme would show recognition of the additional costs incurred by older or disabled tenants who cannot manage their gardens themselves.
- A similar administration scheme such as the Blue Badge scheme could apply, where certain disability benefits “passport” people onto the scheme, and those over 70 years of age would automatically qualify.
- Such a scheme would therefore be less costly to administer which in turn would offset some of the additional cost to the HRA

3.13 Risks

- There would still an element of subsidised cost to the HRA.

3.14 The following categories of customer are currently receiving the service:

291 Over 65
211 Disabled
762 Sheltered

3.15 Customers could fall into one or more of these categories at any one time.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.01 Scrutiny Committee is asked to note

- The agreed plan for the phased implementation of service charges for existing tenants from 2016 following detailed consultation;
- That full implementation of service charges will take effect for new tenants from April 2015

4.02 Scrutiny committee is asked to support the proposals in this paper for re-introducing charging for the assisted garden service in 2016, following detailed customer consultation; and on the basis that there should only be two charges for grass cutting and one for hedges, and that payments can be made weekly.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 **Assisted Gardening Service**

5.02 The service currently costs £0.200m per year (contract and administration). It is the purpose of this paper to seek elected members views on how these costs can best be re-covered without having an adverse and inequitable impact on customers.

5.03 Early proposals show an estimated weekly charge as the table below from April 2015.

	Estimated Discounted Weekly Charge	Estimated Non-Discounted Weekly Charge
Grass Cutting (Small)	1.50	1.75
Grass Cutting (Large)	3.00	3.50
Hedge Cutting	0.65	0.80

5.04 **Service Charges**

The HRA currently funds services to the value of £700k per annum (excluding Administration costs). The estimated cost recovery (based on current service costs) over the next four years is:-

Year 1 (2015/16)

New tenants service charges c£0.015m

Year 2 (2016/17)

As above plus Aerials and cleaning services c£0.370m

Year 3 (2017/18)

As above plus Laundry and Janitor services c£0.460m

Year 4 (2018/19) As above plus Caretaking and Communal garden services c£0.700m

6.00 **ANTI POVERTY IMPACT**

6.01 **Assisted Gardening Service**

6.02 It is recognised that the assisted gardening service is an additional charge for customers who have previously enjoyed the service for free. However, the council has tried to mitigate the impact of this going forward in a number of ways:

- From April 2016, customers will be able to spread the cost over the year.
- Customers can opt-out of the service if they choose, and those customers who cannot do their own gardens will be entitled to a discount.

6.03 **Service Charges**

6.04 The impact of services charges will be less for households on a low income as the service charges that the council proposes introducing a charge for, are currently eligible to be paid by Housing Benefit.

During the consultation period, the council will be discussing the levels of service, whether customers want the service, and the forecasted costs that are likely to be charged with tenants and leaseholders.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 Assisted Gardening Service

7.02 The scheme provides a positive environmental impact by improving the look and feel of the Council's neighbourhoods.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 There is an inequitable impact on disabled people who have to meet costs pertaining to their disability. Requiring assistance with gardening is one such additional cost. However, the purpose of disability benefits is to bridge this gap, and it could therefore be argued that additional financial assistance should not be offered by the council.

8.02 However, by providing a discounted service for qualifying customers, more customers can be helped than was the case with the pre-2014 scheme, whilst still minimising the financial impact to elderly or disabled customers.

8.03 Weekly payment will be possible from April 2016 so that the cost of services can be spread over the financial year, minimising the impact on customers.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 The 2014/15 budget makes provision for an officer to undertake developmental work to implement service charges.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 Full consultation will be required with any tenants affected by the introduction of service charges. This will take place scheme by scheme; with a full opportunity to discuss the proposed charges, quality of service provision, and tenant expectations around service frequency. It is likely that different groups of property could ultimately require different service levels and therefore different charges could be set. At any scheme it would be a majority decision as to service standards/cost and whether a service is provided at all.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 Some early consultation around the principles of charging has already taken place with the Tenant's Federation and with customers who attended the tenants' conference.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 None.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

DATE: **WEDNESDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2014**

REPORT BY: **CHIEF OFFICER (COMMUNITY & ENTERPRISE)**

SUBJECT: **NORTH EAST WALES HOMES - UPDATE**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 To update the committee on the progress made in establishing North East Wales (NEW) Homes and progress to date against the business plan.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 At its meeting on 19 December Cabinet approved the establishment of a housing company and gave delegated authority to officers to take all necessary steps to set that company up.

2.02 The company was created to overcome the barriers the Local Authority faced in meeting housing need locally, due to the current statutory limitations on Local Authorities which do not allow them to grant assured short hold tenancies or have sufficient flexibility in setting rent levels. These limitations proved a constraint for Flintshire in a number of areas including the management of the properties gifted through section 106 agreements, management of empty homes and the regeneration schemes. The company also provided an opportunity to provide a competitive offer to landlords to encourage growth of the private rented sector.

2.03 The company started trading on 3rd April 2014. The Board is made up of 8 directors consisting of 5 councillors, 1 council officer and 2 independent members (who have experience in the housing field) and has met four times. The role of the Board to date has been to oversee operational delivery and financial performance against the three year business plan, oversee the development of all policies and procedures, set the marketing and promotion strategy and develop a longer term strategy to fulfil the mission as laid out in the business plan.

2.04 NEW Homes does not employ its own staff, council staff work on the operational functions including property management, repairs, marketing and financial and legal functions. The council recharges the company for this staff time.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

Operational Update

- 3.01 Flintshire is the first Local Authority in Wales to set up a housing company. This innovative approach to respond to the challenges experienced by residents in accessing affordable housing has been recognised and the Flintshire initiative has been shortlisted for a Welsh Housing Award. The Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty has also responded to an invite to come and learn about the company and visit one of the affordable new build properties.
- 3.02 The most recent operational update is attached at appendix one. This shows the progress of the three main portfolio areas against the projections in the business plan for year one. In summary the company is expected to make a surplus in year 1 though not as large as originally anticipated. The business plan projected 19 new build “gifted” properties in 2014/15. The company has taken ownership and is managing 15 with another five due to be handed over in March 2015. Some of the properties were let later in the year than originally expected and this has created a negative variance in the projected income for year one.
- 3.03 The company has also launched a landlord management offer. The business plan projected that the company would be managing 26 units by the end of 2014/15. The company has entered into management agreements for nine properties which is below target. There has been little marketing early on and staff time has been spent on set up, so it is expected these numbers will grow in the next six months. There are a number of pipeline properties due to be signed up.
- 3.04 The Over 55 Lease Scheme is the third portfolio area which enables an elderly home owner to lease their property to NEW Homes and access more suitable council accommodation. The development of this package has been slower due to legal complexities relating to the allocation of council properties. These are now resolved and there are two home owners waiting to take advantage of this opportunity.
- 3.05 The marketing and promotion of the company has been low key to date while the company has been in development and testing the portfolio offers.
- 3.06 All landlords known to the Council have recently received a letter advising them of the services of the company. Some elected members have promoted the company in their community newsletter. The free press, the council’s website and infonet have

been utilised to promote the company.

- 3.07 Twitter and social media has been used to raise the profile of the company. Articles have been published in Welsh Housing Quarterly and in the Flintshire Business Week Magazine. The company has also been shortlisted for an award in the Chartered Institute of Housing Welsh Housing Awards.
- 3.08 For customers, Grwp Cynefin manage the affordable housing register for the county and they have been marketing the gifted homes via their website. The council's Housing Options team nominate prospective tenants to the company for the managed units.
- 3.09 Property sign boards have been produced and are being utilised. Leaflets have been produced and are being displayed at Connects centres etc.
- 3.10 **Future Development**
- 3.11 At its most recent board meeting the company agreed to a broader approach to the rents charged for managed units. This will allow greater flexibility to negotiate with landlords, while still maintaining the company's core objective to meet the needs of the "squeezed middle" and provide affordable accommodation. There has been a small number of cases where landlords have decided not to work with the company because they have felt that the rent they were being offered was insufficient for a particular property in a particular location.
- 3.12 As any new business would do after its first six months of trading, the board has agreed to hold a facilitated away day to review its business plan and financial targets/goals early in the New Year.
- 3.13 Future plans for promotion of the company include the development of a marketing strategy. This will include reviewing and updating of the website so that it can be used to market properties and services much better and with enhanced customer features. Advertising on the side of council vehicles is being considered, alongside the production of sales brochures, which show site layouts, property features etc. Finally, a policy on event and individual sponsorship is being prepared.
- 3.14 Customer feedback mechanisms are being developed so that the company can ensure that it delivers excellent customer service and can change and shape its service provision to meet customer need and aspiration.
- 3.15 The number of affordable homes managed by NEW Homes will continue to grow in future years through Flintshire's Strategic Housing

And Regeneration Programme (SHARP). The background to the Programme is that the County Council is currently tendering for a developer partner and funder for the development of circa 300 homes on council fund and HRA land over a 5 year plus period. The new homes will be a mixture of housing for social rent, affordable rent, market rent and a range of, for sale property. With the exception of the social rented homes which will be managed by the council, NEW Homes could manage the rented homes, any shared ownership or shared equity homes; and needs to enter into dialogue with the council to negotiate this as part of the procurement process. NEW Homes will want to have a stake in the decisions around quality of homes built, locations, rent levels etc. This could present an exciting opportunity for considerable growth for the company which could see it ultimately owning some of these homes should it wish.

- 3.16 In conclusion the first six months has been successful if a little slower than anticipated. The company is expecting to create a positive return in its first year of trading and further updates will be brought to the committee in due course.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.01 Committee notes the progress to establish and set up the company, and the first six months performance.
- 4.02 Committee notes the future development plans of the company

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.01 The initial set up costs were £4,000 including costs for software, website, email hosting and membership of tenant deposit scheme.
- 5.02 In the business plan NEW Homes anticipated income of £112k for all gifted units. The delay of transferring the gifted properties to NEW Homes has created a shortfall in year of £56k. The net impact of this has resulted in a reduced profit of £28k for the year.
- 5.03 All projected expenditure costs are in line with the Flintshire County Council Service Level Agreement and as anticipated in the business plan.
- 5.04 The set up loan agreed within the business plan was for £100k to be transferred to the company for cash flow purposes at the start of trading at an interest rate of 1.83 % APR.
- 5.05 The loan has been agreed to be split into 4 x £25k amounts and drawn down as needed. The first £25k was transferred on 12th August 2014. This will be repaid over 3 years with payments made every 6 months.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

7.01 None directly arising from this report.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

8.01 None directly arising from this report.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 The purpose for establishing the Company was to help those people that would not have otherwise qualified for social housing or who are unable to afford private rents as well as to give options to older residents. It is therefore promoting access to good quality and suitable housing across all sectors of the population.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 None arising directly from the report.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 None as a result of this report.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 None as a result of this report.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 Appendix 1- Operational update

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

As referred to in the report.

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APPENDIX ONE

Operational Update

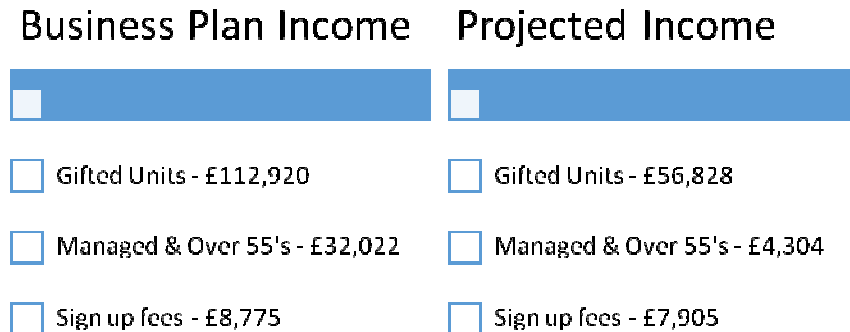
October 2014

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Nicola Spencer and Chris Edwards
NORTH EAST WALES HOMES LTD

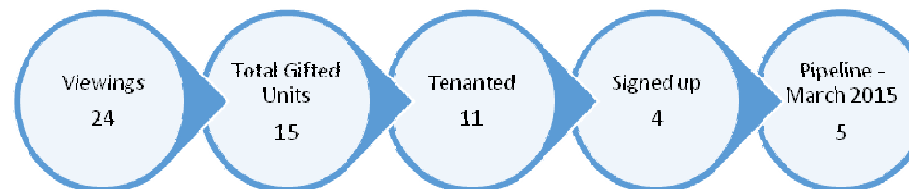
At the end of October, North East Wales Homes (NEW Homes) is projecting a surplus of £28,487 compared to the Business Plan surplus of £88,789, an adverse variance of £60,302.

The variance can be explained as follows:



Gifted Properties

The Business Plan projected 19 gifted units for the full 12 months. Due to delays from Welsh Government transferring from Flintshire County Council to NEW Homes the initial 10 units this created a maximum charging period of 9 months. The remaining 5 units transferring from Flintshire County Council to NEW Homes, took place on 15th October, therefore creating a maximum charging period of 5 months. These delays have contributed an adverse variance of £56,092.



Managed Properties

The Business Plan projected 26 properties for the full 12 months. We currently have 9 properties signed up, of which 6 are tenanted and 3 are awaiting tenants with a further 12 in the pipeline. 10 of the pipeline units are due to come to NEW Homes through the Houses in to Homes scheme towards the end of the financial year. This will be a mix of 1 and 2 bed flats above the shops in Shotton. Flintshire Business Week allowed us to show the brand off and let people put a vision to the concept. We did generate a small amount of interest from prospective tenants, we also have two leads to follow up for potential landlords.

The Managed Property option is currently being marketed by word of mouth and social media sites. This month we have written to 400+ landlords to advise them of our services and rates. This should generate more interest from landlords as we have tenants on the affordable registers awaiting properties.

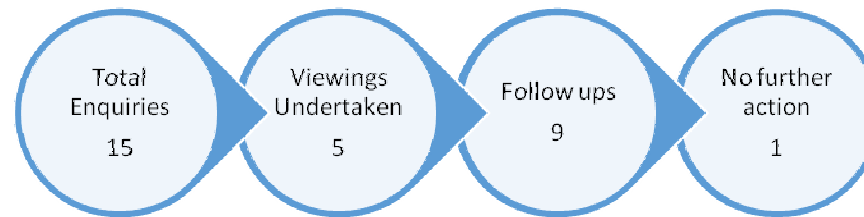
Current properties ...



Over 55's Choice

The Over 55's choice is generating interest from those individuals who wish to downsize and access the council's designated older persons properties. A lease agreement has been drawn up and we have now 2 persons ready to sign the agreement. One of these properties has already undertaken the necessary works to bring the property up to a let able standard.

Since the last board, we have received a further 6 enquiries for this service, appointments are in the process of being made to discuss further.



The Business Plan projected 10 units for the full 12 months, however due to delays with the lease agreement and the amount of units that would be suitable for these home owners we have revised the projection to zero units for this financial year. These delays have contributed an adverse variance of £6,600 over the full 12 months.

Due to having reduced number of properties in NEW Homes this has reduced expenditure projections.



FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

DATE: **WEDNESDAY, 26 NOVEMBER 2014**

REPORT BY: **CHIEF OFFICER (COMMUNITY & ENTERPRISE)**

SUBJECT: **HOUSING ACT WALES 2014**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 To update the committee on progress and early findings from Flintshire's pilot of the new homeless prevention duty to be introduced as part of the Housing Act Wales 2014.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 The Housing Act Wales 2014, received Royal Assent in September 2014 and the provisions within the Act will contribute to the Welsh Government's three strategic priorities for housing: more homes, better homes, and better services. The Act contains legislation covering several diverse areas:

- Regulation of Private Rented Housing for landlords and agents
- Homelessness
- Gypsies and Travellers
- Standards for Social Housing: rents, service charges & housing standard
- Housing Finance : Housing Revenue Account subsidy system
- Co operative Housing : allowing fully mutual housing associations to grant Assured tenancies
- Council Tax for empty dwellings

2.02 The changes to homelessness legislation introduced by the Act are perhaps the most fundamental that have been introduced since 1977 and they will start to take effect from April 2015. Key features of the new legislation include:

- A new duty to help anyone threatened with homelessness within the next 56 days
- A duty to provide help to any homeless person to help them secure a home
- A power rather than a duty to apply the intentionality test

- New powers for local authorities to discharge their homelessness duties through finding accommodation in the private rented sector
- Stronger duties on Housing Associations to support local authorities in carrying out their homelessness duties

2.03 Flintshire County Council was keen to pilot the new enhanced prevention duty as its Housing Options Team already had a successful focus on homeless prevention. Flintshire County Council believes in this approach and recognises the benefit of proactive support as opposed to a focus on an 'eligibility assessment'. The council also recognised that this is a significant change to existing legislation and felt it would be important to have a lead in period to prepare. Delivering the pilot is providing an opportunity for the team to manage the necessary changes, including the change in culture for staff and stakeholders and to assess any need for additional capacity, and increase in costs. The pilot is also intended to enable the Housing Options Team to ensure its services are modelled and structured appropriately to manage the new duty.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 Flintshire County Council has utilised additional homeless prevention funding made available by Welsh Government to carry out the pilot which, has been running for six months. In this period the Housing Options Team has been working to the spirit of the new legislation and the activity and findings are recorded in the report attached at appendix one.

3.02 It is important to note that these are only the early findings and the team are keen to develop further some key areas including customer and stakeholder feedback. Furthermore, there are also some limitations to the pilot as discharge into the private rented sector cannot be fully tested and prison leavers currently remain a priority need group, and therefore piloting prevention with that group is limited.

3.03 The pilot is being supported by a Shelter Cymru worker, who is based within the Housing Options Team. A key aspect of the homeless prevention service is proving to be the independent advice provided by Shelter Cymru and together the council and Shelter are developing a joint definition of what will count as 'all reasonable steps', which will place the council in a positive position ahead of April 2015.

3.04 Both organisations were keen to build on the positive relationship between Flintshire Housing and Shelter Cymru and explore further how independent challenge can be conducted in the best interest of the customer. Working within the team, the Shelter Cymru Housing Advisor is also developing a better understanding of the reasoning behind homelessness decisions and this will minimise the potential for

the council's statutory homeless decisions being subject to legal challenges.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.01 That the Committee notes the progress of the pilot and the early findings and implications..

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 Welsh Government has provided £0.025m funding in this financial year to support the pilot and will also provide transitional funding over the following three years to assist with the additional burdens associated with the changes to the Homeless Legislation. An indicative amount for 2015/16 is £0.228m with additional funding anticipated for 2016/17 and 2017/18 on a reducing basis.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 Having access to quality, affordable, and suitable housing plays a critical role in supporting people to achieve better outcomes and has a particular positive impact on the life chances of children and young people.

6.02 The new statutory duties upon Local Authorities to prevent homelessness will result in more people to being helped to avoid the negative impacts homelessness has upon a person's health, education, employment and social well-being.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 None arising directly from the report.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 The enhanced homelessness prevention duty will be accessible to all members of Flintshire's diverse communities and therefore will increase the level of help and advice that is available for those households who are only eligible for limited assistance under the current legislation.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 None arising directly from the report.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 None as a result of this report. The report will be shared more widely with Welsh Government and other Local Authorities to enable others to learn from the findings contained within the report.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 None as a result of this report

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 Appendix 1 – Homeless Prevention Pilot report

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

None

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Piloting the Homelessness Legislation

Flintshire County Council and Shelter Cymru -working together

October 2014

Contents

PART ONE:	INTRODUCTION
PART TWO:	SUMMARY OF PILOT
PART THREE:	PREVENTION THROUGH JOINT WORKING
PART FOUR:	LEARNING AND CHALLENGES
PART FIVE:	EXPERIENCE SHELTER WORKER IN TEAM
PART SIX:	KEY EARLY FINDINGS

Part One: Introduction

Background

The Housing Act Wales (2104) includes the most fundamental change to homelessness legislation since 1977 and has significant implications in how local authorities will be expected to tackle homelessness from April 2015. For example, the Act will place a new duty upon local authorities to help anyone threatened with homelessness within the next 56 days, irrespective of priority need status and local connection to a local authority and a duty to provide help to any homeless person to help them secure a home.

The intention behind the new prevention duty is to try to avoid the negative impacts homelessness has on a person's health, education, employment and social well-being. Furthermore, successful homelessness prevention interventions are not only beneficial to those threatened with homelessness; they also result in direct cost savings for local authorities and other public services.

Local authorities are expected to consider the most appropriate range of intervention, or interventions, on a case-by-case basis, which are deemed most likely to result in a successful outcome. Within the new legislation, there are more decision-making points and subsequently more potential for a local authority to face legal challenges from applicants exercising their right to review decisions.

The Pilot

The pilot aims to produce examples of how this will work in practice and share learning and experiences. From April 2014 the Housing Options Team started to deliver services within the 'spirit of the legislation' by providing a full homelessness prevention service to anyone at risk of homelessness approaching the local authority, irrespective of their priority need status or local connection. A Shelter Cymru worker is now based part time within the team. The team develops case studies illustrating which reasonable steps were taken, what challenges were faced and where necessary agree on when prevention has failed and when a homeless application needs to be taken.

What are the Expected Outcomes?

They are:

- ✓ The team are prepared for changes
- ✓ Services improved through external challenge
- ✓ customers are supported and provided with external advice throughout the process, helping them to address the causes of homelessness and make informed decisions on finding solutions to their housing problem
- ✓ a stronger emphasis on multi agency working
- ✓ Good practice shared with other Local Authorities

What are the Expected Findings and Learning?

- ❖ Evidence of improved customer experience
- ❖ Impact on level of successful outcomes
- ❖ Objective information on the impact on capacity and resources
- ❖ Case Studies to evidence Good Practice and Challenges
- ❖ The experience for staff and stakeholders in terms of culture change and different working practices
- ❖ Impact on homeless prevention performance
- ❖ Learning to share with other Local Authorities

The team will develop a full report at the end of the pilot but were keen to share some early learning from the pilot.

Part Two: Summary of Pilot

Summary of Pilot

Joint interviews undertaken	14
Other referrals from housing options and income team	22
Total cases consulted on to date	36
Total Presentations	552
Homeless Applications	87
Prevention Rate from Closed Cases	88%

Housing Options Demand

2013/14 Qtr 1 & 2 536 people seen	84% prevention
2014/15 Qtr 1 & 2 552 people seen	88% prevention

At the outset of the pilot, we expected that this approach would have an impact on our performance figures as it would be difficult to maintain the same level of prevention when more intense work was being focussed on a wider group of households. The figures above show that this year has seen a small increase in numbers presenting to the Housing Options team and that the high level of prevention activity has been maintained.

It is interesting to note that within the first six months there has been no reduction in the number of homeless applications. It has been important for the team to still acknowledge that there remain some cases that cannot be prevented and homeless applications must be taken. It is reasonable to assume that once this approach is embedded then homeless cases may drop but certainly for a transition period there is additional prevention activity to be carried out and the same pressure managing full homeless cases remains.

The performance figures for the first six months of the year also demonstrate a marked improvement in reducing the time spent in B&B accommodation for families and single households despite there being more homeless households needing to be placed in such accommodation.

Prevention Resources

In preparation for the new legislation, the pilot has sought to quantify the additional time required in preventing homelessness for those who would not be priority need and those with no local connection. Currently, these households would be entitled to advice and assistance only.

Additional Prevention Time – No Priority Need

A review of a random sample of case files demonstrates the average amount of additional time spent on cases which previously would only have been entitled to advice and assistance. An analysis of **one quarter** shows the following breakdown of presentations:

294 Total presentations

114 No priority need

The 114 cases under current legislation would be entitled to 'advice and assistance' which could vary from anything from an hours work in total to a longer period of time assisting with options.

During this quarter, the prevention cases for these 114 (average 9 per week) were open for an average of 45 days. Taking on a full prevention case for this many households within one quarter will require considerable additional resource. The amount of time spent within the period the case is open varies considerably. However, after reviewing cases with Shelter it has been identified that some of the cases offered assistance through the provision of a deposit Bond may be subject to a formal review in terms of 'all reasonable steps' after April 2015.

"We need to be sure that these are not advice and assistance cases packaged as prevention" **Shelter Pilot Worker**

Moving forward, the pilot will explore and challenge further this definition of 'reasonable steps'. However, it is clear that local authorities need to be prepared for additional staff time to be provided.

Additional Prevention Time – No Local Connection

In the same **quarter** there were **17** cases with no evident local connection. It is these cases that have caused some concern for the team. It is also likely these numbers could increase after April 2015.

There were concerns raised by staff about the work with people with no local connection. Flintshire has not advertised widely that it has been conducting this pilot but has still seen an increase in presentations from England. The team feel it is hard to collate the necessary information:

"Local connection can prove problematic regarding verification of circumstances, e.g. cases from Holmes Chapel, Blackpool, etc. Asking another local authority to assist with home visits is unlikely due to their own priorities and staff willingness. There is also the criminal element of local connection which is unknown – reliance on another LA's police force/probation service in order to obtain information, if disclosed at all."
FCC Housing Options Worker

Case Study

CM had no connection to Flintshire and was staying with a friend he knew in the area. His local connection was to the Chester area. He was single and demonstrated no apparent priority need. He approached housing options for assistance. Under current legislation CM would be provided with advice and assistance and signposted back to the area where he has a local connection.

Action: *Prevention case opened and options explored for CM to return to Chester. CM offered a bond and details given for a number of house shares and bedsits on the bond properties board. CM has now secured a room in a shared house and a deposit bond has been paid by Flintshire.*

Outcome: *Individual assisted to find suitable and affordable accommodation where he **wanted** to live.*

Reasonable steps –

- *Given a full prevention case and offered a bond to secure accommodation in the area despite having no priority need status or local connection.*
- *Exactly the sort of case that would not be dealt with under the current legislation.*

Additional Prevention Resource - Prevention Funding

Prevention spend has remained at a similar level to last year. It was expected that this would increase. It is possible that an earlier proactive approach from staff focused upon keeping people in their current homes means there is less demand for homeless prevention spend associated with last minute prevention to move someone to alternative accommodation.

However, it is likely that with the support of the Shelter Worker, the team will pilot more innovative prevention solutions and this will lead to some more case studies and an increase in homeless prevention spend over the next six months.

Areas for Improvement – Prevention at Home

The numbers of households assisted to remain in their own home was 96, which represents 21% of total prevention figures. Enabling an individual to remain at home especially where they have a secure tenure is a more positive outcome than a prevention move to the private sector which would provide less stability. It is hoped that an outcome from earlier intervention is that a household can remain in their current accommodation. However, a large proportion of cases dealt with are Section 21 notices from within the private sector so this remains a challenge. The team will continue to monitor this outturn and aim to increase the number prevented from needing to move.

The main reason for failed prevention over the initial six month period is:

1. **Loss of contact with household** - this may not necessarily mean prevention has failed contact may have been lost due to a person securing accommodation and not requiring assistance anymore. However, it cannot be recorded as a successful outcome.
2. **Homeless Application Triggered** - 56 days passed and a homeless form was triggered. This again does not necessarily signal a failed prevention as prevention activities continue alongside the homeless investigation.

“One of main positives is prevention success rate is very high. I think a number of innovative practices have been utilised and that most people approaching Flintshire for assistance are getting a very good service. I think we have also made great strides in joint working and linking in with other Flintshire departments such as the Income Team in particular.”

FCC Shelter Pilot Worker

PART THREE: Prevention through Joint Working

Supporting People

The support gateway is based with the Housing Options Team. In the six month period there were 552 presentations, 450 prevention cases and 232 of these cases referred to the Support Gateway to access one of the Supporting People funded projects. This demonstrates that over this period Supporting People funded services have contributed to just over half of the prevention or homeless cases.

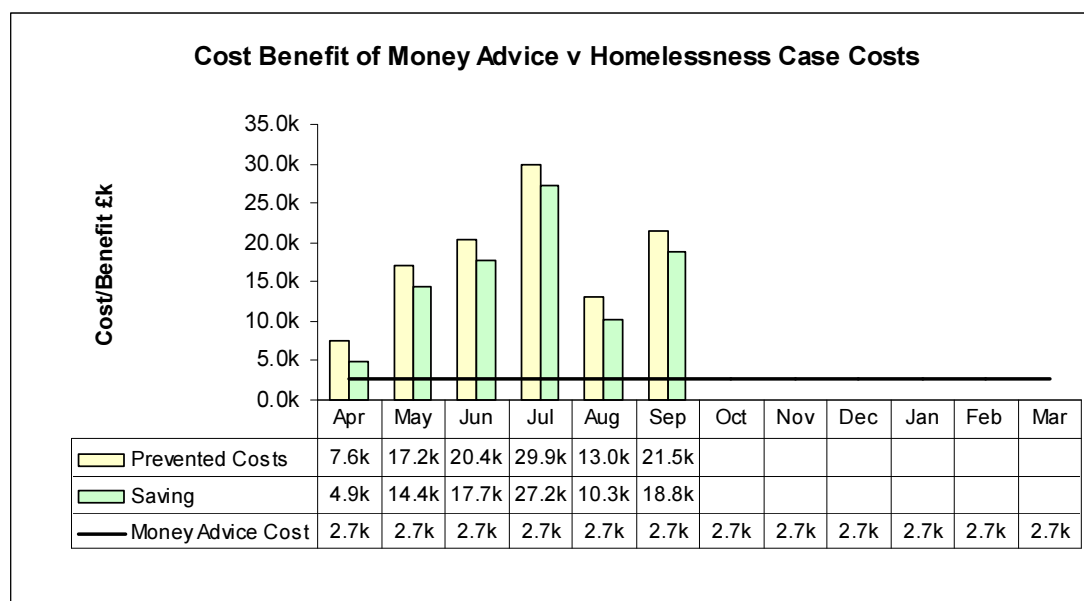
There are dedicated Supporting People posts linked to the Private Sector team and assisting those in B&B which do provide practical assistance with prevention where households need more assistance than can be provided by the Housing Options Officers.

The speed in which support is allocated through the gateway is monitored for performance reporting. The gateway has on average allocated support within 1.5 days for the first six months of this year. This prompt allocation of support is vital when the service is dealing with complex or vulnerable cases.

The risk of reductions to the availability of these Supporting People funded services remains a concern.

Specialist Money Advice

The chart below demonstrates the contribution made by the Specialist Money Advice Worker based within the Housing Options Team. In some homeless prevention cases specialist advice is necessary to resolve complex debt issues. Over the six month period the worker closed 66 cases where the outcome had prevented the individual losing their home. The chart demonstrates the cost of funding this post compared to the potential cost of a homeless case.



Flintshire County Council Income Team

Preventing a household from losing their social housing tenancy is important. This is often the most suitable, secure and affordable option for the household. The first six months of the pilot has seen a closer relationship developed between the Income Team and the wider Housing Solutions Team. Meetings are held at the earliest opportunity to prevent court action wherever possible.

Between April – September 2013:

93 Possession claims were put into court and 44 warrants of eviction applied for. Costs to FCC - £14,140

Between April – September 2014:

37 Possession claims were put into court and 18 warrants of evictions applied for. Costs to FCC - £11,230

The cost savings are low as the cost of applying for possession has risen significantly in 2014. Other factors will impact on the number of possessions and warrants but case files demonstrate the early joint working between the Shelter Worker, Housing Options, Supporting People and the Income Team has contributed to a reduction in evictions when prevention is possible.

Private Sector/ Bond Team

Most people threatened with homelessness lack finance which is the main barrier to re-housing so an effective in-house bond scheme is a vital homeless prevention tool. Over the six month period the Bond Scheme issued 98 bonds worth £30,500.

There is some additional work identified for Flintshire regarding the quality of some Bond properties. However, Flintshire does have a large number of landlords and agents who will accept a Bond and this has proved a really important prevention tool for non priority single cases.

The Shelter worker has noted that other Local Authorities have Bond Schemes but they have limited use and landlords are less keen to work with them. So even with a Bond Scheme in place it is of limited use as a prevention tool if landlords will not accept a bond.

The development of North East Wales Homes (Flintshire's housing company managing properties for landlords) has been in early development over the six month period. We have accommodated a couple of homeless prevention cases where market rents were unaffordable and expect these numbers to grow as the company builds its portfolio. Increasing the availability through the Bond and NEW Homes will remain a priority over the next months in order for Flintshire to have suitable and affordable properties available for when a household cannot stay in their current accommodation.

Welfare Rights and Advice Gateway

Involvement from the Welfare Rights Team and the Advice Gateway hosted by Flintshire Citizens' Advice Bureau continues to be an important part of preventing homelessness. The provision of timely advice and support on welfare benefit entitlements and income maximisation is a key aspect of successful homeless prevention as demonstrated within case files.

Case Studies

The following two case studies recorded during the pilot provides a practical example of how the teams work together to prevent homelessness.

RD is a FCC Council tenant with a secure tenancy. Living at the property with RD is his wife and four dependent children. A Suspended Possession Order was made in 2008. The household had fallen into rent arrears of just over £2,000 due to previous employment on a 'zero hours' contract. RD was receiving no hours during January 2014 to March 2014, and was advised he was not eligible for assistance from the Job Centre as he was being treated as employed and had no proof that he was not earning. RD has now secured a permanent, full-time job as an electrician on the minimum wage and is in receipt of Working and Child Tax Credits and Child Benefit.

FCC applied for a Warrant of Eviction as they were unaware of RD's circumstances. The Income Officer approached the Housing Options team to advise of the eviction due to there being 4 children in the household. RD's case was immediately taken on by Housing Options, Accommodation Support and the Shelter Advisor.

Action: *FCC Welfare Rights team assisted RD to make a Housing Benefit application and submitted a request to have the award of Housing Benefit backdated to January 2014 when RD had nil-income. The Shelter Advisor attended the RD's Court hearing where the eviction warrant was suspended on terms that RD paid his weekly rent plus £5 per week to reduce the arrears. The application for backdated Housing Benefit also reduced the arrears by £867. If backdate request had been unsuccessful, the Housing Options Service had offered to clear a sum off the arrears through the use of their homeless prevention funds.*

Outcome – *RD's homelessness prevented and kept in family home with strong security of tenure. FCC also benefit as arrears have been reduced by £867 and a large family have not had to access expensive temporary accommodation. This is a particularly good outcome in view of new Housing Act and not finding families to be intentionally homeless.*

Reasonable Steps:

- *Specialist advice utilised*
- *Referral to welfare rights to maximise in-work social security income*

- *Homeless prevention fund offer to clear some of the arrears (if HB backdate had been unsuccessful)*
- *Accommodation support offered*

RR is an assured short hold tenant with RSL since March 2014. RR is 19 with very limited life skills. RR has been in the property six months and already on a final warning for anti-social behaviour. There are allegations of friends staying in the property, making threats to other tenants in the buildings and use of weapons in the building. A section 21 is issued by the housing association but not expiring until March 2015 (end of the fixed term.) RR has an intensive support mentor who is of the opinion that RR cannot maintain a tenancy as he has no control over his friends, has a very young mind-set and has also accrued fuel debts as is unable to budget. There are no arrears as tenant receives full housing benefit. Incidents appeared to be escalating as friends now staying with him and housing association in the process of applying to court for an anti-social behaviour injunction excluding him from his home.

Action: *Discussions held with RR, intensive support mentor, housing options, Shelter Worker and the RSL.. All in agreement that the current tenancy is not sustainable; RR is not coping and causing distress to others in the building. Shelter legal opinion sought and advice provided that an injunction very difficult to defend based on evidence on ASB file. This young tenant would then be facing a limited duty from housing options and homelessness. All were aware that this could easily spiral into other problems and issues.*

Decision taken by housing options to refer RR for supported housing that could meet his needs. RR has now been offered a placement in a supported project. The RSL agreed to work with the service and not apply for the injunction for a further two weeks to allow time for the planned move. RR will surrender his tenancy so there are no exclusions from the housing list due to eviction or injunction for anti-social behaviour. The tenant is protected for future housing when he is ready to manage a tenancy independently.

Reasonable Steps and Outcomes:

- *Early prevention undertaken (did not make RR wait until he was homeless or at crisis point)*
- *Move to more suitable supported accommodation*
- *Planned move*
- *Prevented injunction and exclusions which would have rendered RR without options later on.*
- *Homeless Intentionality ignored by the service to achieve the best outcome*

Part Four: Learning and Challenges

A change in culture and working practices

The pilot has seen a change in focus for Housing Options staff from a role that is primarily focussed on the 'assessment' of someone's eligibility and interpretation of legislation to a more proactive role, helping to identify and implement solutions to resolve housing problems. . It is worthy of note that the team felt they did more than provide advice and assistance before the pilot so this was not so much of a major change as may be experienced where a council more strictly follows the current legislation's requirements.

An obvious concern for staff would be everyone's capacity to prevent when this activity will take more time and the need to continue to focus on those who have become homeless. In order to manage, teams need to be open to utilising the assistance that is available from other areas including the triage service, estate management staff, accommodation support, welfare rights, debt workers and social services. Within Flintshire, these teams are based within the same office and have improved their joint working throughout the pilot. However, the 'sharing of responsibility' is a change which Housing Options staff have had to come to terms with.

It is possible that recent training delivered across Wales may have provided mixed messages to staff. This training focussed very much on the legislation and the assessment and decision whereas part of the culture change we are trying to progress in line with the 'spirit of the legislation' is to ignore eligibility and priority needs status and prevent homelessness for everyone.

"Some officers are still concerned about prioritising contacting/ making appointments with traditionally priority cases but are getting better. Likewise, the 'spend to save' pot needs to be seen as a generic pot for all, not just priority cases."

FCC Shelter Pilot Worker

It is evident across wider staff teams that there is a perception of those who are more deserving. The disregard of intentionality and widening from 'priority need' can create frustrations around time spent with households or individuals who then do not follow up on any advice or assistance provided. Wider teams can also become frustrated with the assistance provided to households who they perceive have done nothing to help themselves Some of this frustration for the Housing Options Team is perhaps more prevalent within the pilot as they are unable to discharge into the private sector (without the applicants agreement) and as such struggle to engage those households who will not accept prevention activity, as they only want a council property.

A questionnaire was sent out to staff to ask their opinions on the experience of the pilot and the legislation. The general feedback from Housing Options

staff was that the prevention activity was positive and not concentrating on priority need was positive as this would deliver better outcomes for local people.

“Yes the prevention approach is better for customers. For those authorities who do not already provide this service, customers should be given more option and more choice in making decisions about their housing situation.”

FCC Housing Options Worker

Capacity and Resources

The service has made changes to try and create additional capacity in preparation for piloting the legislation. The team has an additional 0.5 full time equivalent post compared to the same period last year.

The service has also attempted to create additional capacity by changing working practices and team remodelling. A triage service (previously housing application inputting team) started part way through the pilot. This new service model has all telephone calls and face to face enquiries directed to the triage service to provide initial advice and assistance on the same day and appropriately prioritise presentations. It also ensures Housing Options Officers are freed up to work on prevention and managing their homeless cases as opposed to managing phone enquiries. There is always one Housing Options Officer on duty who is passed the triage forms where there is a threat of homelessness. Other cases can be forwarded directly to the Private Sector Team, Bond Service, Support Gateway or Welfare Rights and have their issues dealt with more promptly than awaiting a housing options interview.

This is in the very early days of implementation and the team are not realising the full benefit whilst training and support for the triage team is still required. Once confidence is developed, we expect the triage service to resolve low level housing issues and create the additional time required for the officers.

Forthcoming training provided by Welsh Government will provide a great opportunity for the local authority to train staff from front line services who do not necessary have a direct responsibility for homelessness or the prevention of homelessness. This will give an insight and overview of what is expected from a ‘corporate duty to prevent homelessness’ and how important it is for services to work in partnership to *increase shared learning and make best use of available resources*.

Stakeholder Feedback

An important part of the Homeless Prevention Pilot will be the views and feedback from our customers and stakeholders. There are a range of internal

and external partners working alongside the teams delivering homeless prevention. Stakeholder surveys are being distributed to relevant partners and organisations to seek their views on the pilot and the outcomes. A full report on stakeholder feedback will be included in the final report. However, since starting the pilot we have received some informal feedback from partners.

‘Disregard Intentionality’ - As can be seen from the case studies, Flintshire has disregarded intentionality in a number of cases and in some instances for the same household repeatedly. Social landlords have questioned at what point a line would be drawn and discussed with us the difficulty disregarding intentionality may create in managing tenancies and collecting rents from a few difficult households if the threat of eviction means nothing to them as the Housing Options team would always assist such households and owe them a full homelessness duty. There have been discussions through the pilot about what happens when all opportunities have been exhausted.

‘No Local Connection’ – Flintshire has seen a small increase in inappropriate referrals from across borders (including England). This is with very little promotion that we will assist irrespective of local connection. It is a possibility that some Welsh local authorities with borders with England could see some increases. Staff feedback has also covered the difficulty of managing risk and collecting information.

‘Offenders not a Priority Need Group’ – Concerns raised by statutory and voluntary organisations who deal with offenders about how this will all impact on offenders. Reassurance has been provided about early intervention but it would appear some investment in this area will be necessary come April 2015.

Customer Experience Feedback

We have used a customer experience approach in the past. We will be selecting a number of households who have been through the service over the last 6 months to get an independent view on their ‘customer experience’. These findings will be included in the final report.

We have included customer comments from our routine customer feedback sessions offered to everyone who presents.

Part Five: An Independent Advice Worker in the Team

An important part of measuring the pilot is assessing how this arrangement has worked and whether this can speed up cases, improve customer service and reduce time spent on reviews of decisions.

In the last six months, Flintshire County Council has had only one review of its homeless decisions. A reduced level of reviews will save staff and management time and reduce delays in delivering a clear outcome for customers. There is however the potential for reviews to increase after April 2015 as there are more triggers to request a review within the new legislation. Therefore, any role that may keep reviews at a minimum level will reduce staff and management time and improve customer service.

Having an independent advice worker in the team has been a challenge and feedback from team members was mixed about the arrangement. Staff do appreciate the support and assistance they have received from the Shelter Worker and do feel that they have made better decisions. However, they feel that the role needs to be more clearly defined. The Housing Options Officers and the Shelter Worker felt one of the biggest challenges was maintaining 'independence'.

A number of teams have been able to make use of the 'independent expertise' on site and have been able to engage in meaningful discussion on prevention approaches and reasonable steps. Areas include, trying to 'buy' extra time at court and debating when a homeless application needs to be taken. Discussion and agreement on such issues, after April 2015, could prevent a review being submitted and avoid the additional cost and time responding to a review creates for a local authority (and for advice services). It is clear there is a benefit to the advice and joint work being given on the spot and this has enabled all teams and officers to progress as swiftly as possible to the best outcome.

We believe customers are getting a better service as they are able to see both Housing Options and Shelter on the same day, in the same venue and can leave knowing that something is being done and the advice given by both agencies matches. This can take away some of the worry or concern or time spent dealing with complaints or representations from other parties if the customer is confident that the advice and assistance they have received is correct and fair.

The challenge for the advisor and the team is maintaining that independence and clarity for the customer that the Shelter worker is not a Flintshire employee. Flintshire has seconded the Shelter worker for 21 hours a week for the purpose of the pilot. There is still an external independent Shelter Advice Worker in Flintshire. The experience of the pilot worker is that the work load at times has been high as the post tends to field questions and cases from the Housing Options Team, Bond and Supporting People on a daily basis and in addition now manages Income Team referrals.

"I believe cases are resolved quicker. I believe a lot of the work that I do also helps to reduce the Housing Options workload. This is through early intervention with local authority tenants/ court cases to resolve it thus avoiding the team needing to take it on and adding to their workload or referring out for advice. I hope that by asking for my advice on cases that the correct decisions are also being made, which again reduces the teams workload on reviews. Also, the increased information sharing can lead to a more informed decision."

FCC Pilot Shelter Worker

Part Six: Summary of Early Learning

Early findings from this pilot about preparation for the new Homeless Duty are detailed below. The pilot is in the early stages and there is some additional information that will be collated for future reports.

Prevention through Joint Working:

A clear thread through the cases reviewed is the role played by wider teams in successful prevention. The case studies nearly always include prevention services being delivered within a framework that incorporates a range of social welfare advice and support services. Therefore, a number of teams from the following list need to have strong working links with housing options:

- Debt advice
- Welfare Rights
- Estate management
- Income team
- Children's services
- Bond Scheme/ Private lettings
- Supporting People Gateway

In some cases it is the teams that will assist practically with prevention but in others it is being able to work together to agree actions. Within Flintshire, all the teams above are based in the same building and most within the same office and have built good working relationships. The numbers and additional prevention cases could not have been managed by the Housing Options Team alone.

Staff Resources

The first six months has shown that there is a need for additional staff capacity to manage full prevention cases for those currently owed only advice and assistance. So far in the pilot, there has been additional time spent on prevention for additional cases and we have seen no reduction in the numbers of homeless applications accepted or reductions in numbers in B&B. It is expected that over time this will happen but initially there is a need for more staff time on prevention whilst the same amount of time is still being given to managing homeless cases.

Concerns over the Local Connection Changes

There have been concerns raised about managing cases with no local connection and the risks associated by staff and stakeholders. There seems to be a real risk numbers may increase from April 2015 and the impact this may have on other statutory services.

Positive feedback for Prevention Approach

There will be more work carried out through the pilot but the general feedback is positive about the prevention approach and this providing a better customer service and improved job satisfaction for staff.

Triage Lessons

Learning would be that other Local Authorities set these up as soon as possible so they are up and fully functional and trained ahead of the homeless prevention duty. Investment in this area could form an important part of the transition funding.

Reduce Homelessness

Under the new prevention duty customers can no longer be told to wait until they have court papers/ eviction warrant and the homeless duty kicks in whilst in the interim no work is done to relieve the situation. By doing the prevention work this situation is largely avoided and it is likely that homeless applications will start to drop.

Customer Service

One of the most common complaints from customers threatened with homelessness is the feeling that the service is not doing anything and they become increasingly anxious as they wait for notice to be served or court papers to arrive. Many are left feeling they have to hit rock bottom or an emergency situation before any assistance is offered. Prevention should alleviate these fears as work will be done with them as soon as a notice is issued or they fall into arrears.

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

DATE: **WEDNESDAY 26TH NOVEMBER, 2014**

REPORT BY: **HOUSING AND LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY FACILITATOR**

SUBJECT: **FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 Items feed into a Committee's Forward Work Programme from a number of sources. Members can suggest topics for review by Overview & Scrutiny Committees, members of the public can suggest topics, items can be referred by the Cabinet for consultation purposes, or by County Council or Chief Officers. Other possible items are identified from the Cabinet Work Programme and the Strategic Assessment of Risks & Challenges.

2.02 In identifying topics for future consideration, it is useful for a 'test of significance' to be applied. This can be achieved by asking a range of questions as follows:

1. Will the review contribute to the Council's priorities and/or objectives?
2. Are there issues of weak or poor performance?
3. How, where and why were the issues identified?
4. Do local communities think the issues are important and is there any evidence of this? Is there evidence of public dissatisfaction?
5. Is there new Government guidance or legislation?
6. Have inspections been carried out?
7. Is this area already the subject of an ongoing review?

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 Overview & Scrutiny presents a unique opportunity for Members to determine the Forward Work Programme of the Committees of which they are Members. By reviewing and prioritising the Forward Work Programme Members are able to ensure it is Member-led and includes the right issues. A copy of the Forward Work Programme is attached at Appendix 1 for Members' consideration which has been updated following the last meeting.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.01 That the Committee considers the draft Forward Work Programme attached as Appendix 1 and approve/amend as necessary.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 None as a result of this report.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 None as a result of this report.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 None as a result of this report.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 None as a result of this report.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 None as a result of this report.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 N/A.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 Publication of this report constitutes consultation.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 Appendix 1 – Forward Work Programme

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

None.

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CURRENT FWP

Date of meeting	Subject	Purpose of Report	Scrutiny Focus	Responsible / Contact Officer	Submission Deadline
<p>7 January, 2015</p> <p>12.45 p.m. – 4.30 p.m.</p> <p>Theatr Clwyd</p>	<p><u>All Member & Tenant Workshop</u> To consider the arrangements for the introduction of self-financing for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA)</p>				
<p>14 January, 2015</p>	<p>Quarterly Performance Reporting</p> <p>Review of Strategic Housing Partnership</p> <p>Update on Tenant Involvement</p> <p>Update on the implementation of SARTH</p>	<p>To consider Q2 performance outturns for improvement targets.</p> <p>To review the Strategic Housing Partnership</p> <p>To consider tenants satisfaction results and the involvement of tenants in service improvements.</p> <p>To update Members on the implementation of the regional housing register and allocations policy.</p>	<p>Performance Reporting</p> <p>Service Delivery</p> <p>Performance Monitoring</p> <p>Performance Monitoring</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise)</p> <p>Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise)</p> <p>Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise)</p> <p>Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise)</p>	

<p>24 February, 2015</p>	<p>Work of RSL's operating in Flintshire</p>	<p>To enable the Committee to meet with representatives of Housing Associations operating in Flintshire.</p>	<p>Service Improvement</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise)</p>	<p>16 February 2015</p>
<p>24 March 2015</p> <p>Members of the Environment OSC invited for this item</p>	<p>Quarterly Performance Reporting</p>	<p>To consider Q3 performance outturns for improvement targets.</p>	<p>Performance Reporting</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise)</p>	<p>16 March 2015</p>
	<p>Private Sector Housing Renewal</p>	<p>To consider progress on the delivery of Flintshire's first Renewal Area, general service development and county wide projects.</p>	<p>Performance Monitoring</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise)</p>	
	<p>Vibrant and Viable Places</p>	<p>To review progress made following the allocation of funding as part of the Vibrant and Viable Places Bid.</p>	<p>Performance Monitoring</p>	<p>Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise)</p>	

24 April 2015	Council House Development	To consult the Committee on the outcome of the procurement programme and delivery of new homes	Service Delivery	Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise)	16 April 2015
	Performance of the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit	To enable the Committee to monitor the performance of the Anti-Social Behaviour Unit	Performance Reporting	Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise)	
	Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	To enable the Committee to further review this Policy.	Service Delivery	Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise)	
1 June 2015	Update on North East Wales Homes & Property Management	To update Members on the work of the North East Wales Homes & Property Management	Performance Monitoring	Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise)	21 May 2015
8 July, 2015	Quarterly Performance Reporting	To consider Q4/Year End performance outturns for improvement targets.	Performance Reporting	Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise)	30 June 2015
	Improvement Plan 2015/16	To consider the draft Improvement Plan 2015/16	Performance Reporting	Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise)	

REGULAR ITEMS

Month	Item	Purpose of Report	Responsible / Contact Officer
Quarterly / Annual	Performance Reporting	To consider performance outturns for improvement targets against directorate indicators.	Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise)
Six monthly	Private Sector Housing Renewal	To consider progress on the delivery of Flintshire's first Renewal Area, general service development and county wide projects.	Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise)
Annually	Update on Delivery of Choices Document	To receive an update report on the delivery of the Choices Document.	Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise)
Six monthly	Welfare Reform Update – including Universal Credit	To update Members on the impact of Welfare Reform and the cost to the Council.	Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise)
Six monthly	Update on North East Wales Homes & Property Management	To update Members on the work of the North East Wales Homes & Property Management	Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise)
Annually	Vibrant and Viable Places	To review progress made following the allocation of funding as part of the Vibrant and Viable Places Bid.	Chief Officer (Community and Enterprise)